

A Report of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies Conference on

THE EU & NATO: HARMONIZING EFFORTS IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Sponsored by the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies
and the German Foreign Office
April 7-10, 2003 Berlin, Germany

Compiled by Alan Gorowitz*

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The beginning months of 2003 have witnessed historic moments in the evolution of the policies and visions of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Southeast Europe. On March 30, 2003, NATO forces handed over responsibility for peace-keeping operations in Macedonia to a European Union-led operation. Dubbed Operation Concordia, this operation marked an important victory toward harmonizing the efforts of the EU and NATO. Almost simultaneously, many countries of Southeast Europe were taking important steps toward integration into European structures: Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovenia signed the protocols for Accession to NATO in March 2003. Finally, many European leaders were pointing to the need for the EU to more fully develop its European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in order to better cope with world events.

In light of these changes, the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and the German Foreign Office jointly sponsored a conference in Berlin, April 7-10, 2003. An integral part of Marshall Center efforts to consistently reexamine the future of cooperative security in Europe and Eurasia, the conference brought together 35 representatives from Southeast European (SEE) countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, FYROM, Romania, and Slovenia) with observers from EU and NATO countries. The interagency purpose of the conference was supported by participation from a variety of ministries and organizations responsible for their countries' relationships with NATO and the EU, including the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Offices of the President or Prime Minister, and several Parliamentarians.

The purpose of the conference was four-fold. First, the conference was a forum for leaders from the European Union and its constituent countries to provide their visions for the future of the European Security and Defense Policy, and the role of

NATO within this vision. Second, the conference provided an opportunity for EU and NATO leaders to provide some insights into the future capabilities that the EU and NATO would need to face future challenges in Southeast Europe. Third, the conference served as a forum for a two-way communication between representatives from SEE countries and senior leaders from the EU and NATO concerning consultative processes that sought to engage leaders from SEE into the formulation of EU and NATO visions. Fourth, the conference provided a venue to discuss the future role of the SEE countries in EU and NATO cooperative actions and the mechanisms that would facilitate cooperation.

The conference methodology provided a forum for EU and NATO leaders to present their visions during morning sessions, followed by an opportunity for SEE representatives to discuss these visions in smaller workshops during the afternoon. These workshops were supported by a small number of representatives from EU and NATO countries who provided on the spot feedback to issues of concern. Workshops produced common assessments and recommendations for the future that were reported back to the larger plenary at the end of the day.

This report will not attempt to summarize the future visions of the ESDP or the future vision of NATO as expressed by the leaders present at the conference. It is assumed that there is ample direct access to EU and NATO documents that express future visions and strategies. The primary purpose here is to convey the general themes of conclusions and recommendations provided by the participants from the SEE countries. It should be noted that, like all Marshall Center events, this conference followed a strict policy of non-attribution for both speakers and participants. The conclusions that follow represent the author's understanding of the general mood of the conference participants as well as his understanding of the specific recommendations put forward by the workshops. In no way do these conclusions and recommendations reflect the

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THE FUTURE OF THE ESDP

Three distinguished speakers provided the historical background and visions for the future of the ESDP. Dr. Klaus Sharioth, State Secretary of the German Foreign Office, provided the context through which the ESDP development was continuing. Ms. Elizabeth Pond, journalist and scholar at the German Council on Foreign Relations, commented on the historical background and continental forces that were shaping the formulation of the European Security and Defense Policy. Lastly, General Rainer Schuwirth, Director General of the EU Military Staff, offered a detailed view of the mechanisms that were influencing the planning of the EU security structures.

A general theme emerged from discussions that recognized the importance of following the development of the ESDP, while understanding that its unclear direction would minimize the ability of SEE leaders to properly integrate ESDP-related issues into future planning.

The participants noted the importance of the development of the ESDP in shaping the future European security architecture. However, it was a common perception among participants that the EU vision for the future was unclear. Many participants questioned the ability of their leaders to con-

sider the future of the ESDP in their planning while the future parameters of the ESDP remained undefined. A general theme emerged from discussions that recognized the importance of following the development of the ESDP, while understanding that its unclear direction would minimize the ability of SEE leaders to properly integrate ESDP-related issues into future planning.

Of critical importance is the common view held by many participants that the EU must stay engaged in the region and should continue, even accelerate, its enlargement process in the region. In fact, it was noted that the EU should enhance the transparency of the process to better facilitate engagement by SEE leaders. In a similar vein, participants recommended that EU leaders consider the ramifications of enlargement; specifically suggesting that enlargement could create new divisions within a region that has succeeded in building regional and bilateral partnerships among countries. This was a concern echoed throughout the conference. Participants noted specifically concerns related to the Schengen Agreement, and suggested that in order to avoid new divisions within the region, the EU as well as the candidate countries should remain flexible and remain open TO establish creative solutions.

NATO AND THE ESDP

The future relationship between the European Security and Defense Policy and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was a dominant theme of discussion during the conference. Three distinguished panelists provided insights into the current debates that consider the harmonization of efforts between policymakers in the EU and NATO. BG Jürgen Bornemann, Deputy Assistant Chief of Armed Forces Staff for Politico-Military Affairs & Arms Control, at the Ministry of Defense of Germany, offered some insights into EU plans to ensure that EU structures are developed in a way to minimize duplication and enhance cooperation with NATO structures. Mr. Edgar Buckley, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defense Planning and Operations, offered some insights into the methodologies in which NATO could further maintain and strengthen harmonization with the ESDP process. Finally, Mr. Karsten D. Voigt, Coordinator for German-American Co-operation at the German Federal Foreign Office, discussed the background of these harmonization efforts and set forth the case for continuation of this process.

Conference participants fully supported NATO and EU efforts to continue to harmonize their efforts in the SEE region. They suggested that NATO and EU leaders should form a “common approach” to the region. This recommendation was born out of a common conclusion that SEE countries did not want to find themselves in a position of have to choose between actions or policies that supported one organization over the other.

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A discussion of the future capabilities needed for integration into NATO or the ESDP suggested that countries were using NATO integration processes (Membershi Action Plans and Accession/Integration strategies) as their primary source of direction. Like their opinion of the EU, participants clearly supported an acceleration of NATO enlargement in the region, making the case that NATO and the EU needed to be inclusive organizations. Lastly, they strongly recommended that both NATO and the EU also consider an enlargement of capabilities to include those needed to fight non-traditional threats such as organized criminals and illegal trafficking in drugs or human beings.

THE EU AND NATO IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

The visions of future involvement of the EU and NATO in Southeast Europe sparked a lively discussion among participants. Pieter Feith, Deputy Director General of the General

Secretariat of the Council of the European Union and former NATO Director of Crisis Management & Operations Directorate and Head of the Balkans Task Force, offered some insights into the current and future roles of the EU in the Balkans, noting specifically Operation Concordia and expanding missions in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Minister Michael L. Durkee, International Affairs Advisor to SACEUR (SHAPE) offered some insights into the NATO planning in SEE that raised discussion of the shape and missions of NATO in the Balkans. Finally, General (ret) Constantine Degeratu, former Chief of Defense of Romania and current professor at the George. C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, commented on the EU and NATO visions from the perspective of the region.

As stated above, participants recognized the importance of NATO and EU engagement in SEE, and fully supported

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continued and enhanced engagement. However, there was a concern among many participants that the realities of the region were not well understood by policymakers in Brussels and in the various capitals of Europe. Participants specifically recommended that EU and NATO leaders enhance the consultative mechanisms that increase direct involvement of the SEE countries in strategy development and policy formula-

tion. They suggested that there were past problems with the timing of EU or NATO initiatives in relation to national events such as elections or local/regional initiatives. Furthermore, there is the perception that the approaches in setting EU and NATO processes do not take into account the economic and social situations in individual countries. Finally, some participants noted that the EU and NATO should reevaluate the causes and resulting perceptions from the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Another area of recommendations focused on the need for consultations with other organizations and initiatives. Participants noted some frustration with the lack of coordination between EU initiatives (such as those supported by the Stability Pact), NATO initiatives, OSCE initiatives, bilateral initiatives (such as those supported by US European Command or the German Foreign Office), and regionally-supported initiatives (such as the Southeastern Europe Defense Ministerial). This was not a call for new initiatives, as there was clearly a feeling that the region was saturated with

good initiatives, but rather a call for consolidation and rationalization of existing programs.

Participants concluded that increasing the role of representatives from the SEE countries in EU and NATO strategic planning for the region would improve the effectiveness of their initiatives and further harmonize their activities with ongoing initiatives in the region led by individual regional actors or other organizations. They recommended that these consultations be consistent and sustained.

THE EU AND NATO:

COOPERATIVE ACTION AND THE SEE COUNTRIES

The main objective of the conference was to produce a set of recommendations for EU and NATO leaders with strategic planning functions. Workshop moderators consistently focused their groups on the goal of providing concrete recommendations for improving cooperative action between the EU and NATO on the one hand, and the countries of the region on the other. To provide some context to these discussions, Ambassador Dr. Günther Altenburg, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs offered some insights into the future of NATO and EU cooperative actions in Southeast Europe, and Michael Schaefer, Political Director of the German Federal Foreign Office, provided a political background to the decision-making processes that were shaping the future of the ESDP in relation to SEE. Ambassador Hans Jorg Eiff, the former Special Representative of the Secretary General of NATO to Skopje, suggested some of the important lessons learned from the past experiences and made some critical suggestions for the future of NATO and EU engagement in the region. Finally, Ambassador Boyko Noev, former Bulgarian Minister of Defense, sparked discussion by challenging some of the underlying assumptions that form the basis for NATO and EU policies in Southeast Europe.

Discussions focused on the myriad of initiatives from the EU and NATO that support security and stability in the region. Some commented that many of these initiatives are not focused enough and need to be streamlined toward specific objectives. Participants noted the importance of tying the security initiatives to the economic reform/support initiatives. Others highlighted the importance of public engagement and support.

A general perception emerged that participants saw themselves as receivers of a product in the form of specific initiatives of policy visions as opposed to seeing themselves as builders of the initiatives. A strong sense of ownership and responsibility for the security and stability of the region focused many of the recommendations on methods to increase consultation and engagement from the region. Likewise, there was broad recognition that individual countries in the region had to continue their own internal reforms, and continue to improve their relationships within the region in order to become integrated into Transatlantic and European structures.

The final workshops produced several important recommendations for cooperative action that, taken as a whole, reinforced the common perception among the participants that the challenges of the region are best solved in cooperation with the people and institutions within the region. There was a strong sense of ownership of the solutions, with little distinction as to whether the solutions come within the EU or NATO framework or within an internal, bilateral, or regional framework. Several participants noted that EU or NATO

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operations in SEE could be enhanced by a greater reliance on countries from the region (for example, further integrating the new NATO members into SEE operations).

The participants expressed a hope that leaders in the EU and NATO would consider these recommendations in the spirit of cooperation in which

they were offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Coordinate EU and NATO actions to prevent the necessity for individual countries to choose between a NATO and an EU policy;
- Coordinate EU and NATO actions with existing multilateral initiatives such as the South-East Europe Defense Ministerial Process, and cooperative groups that extend to neighboring regions;
- Coordinate EU and NATO actions with existing bilateral initiatives such as those supported by US European Command and the German Foreign Office;
- Focus on initiatives that have their roots within the region and take advantage of regional contributions like the Multinational Peace Force in South-eastern Europe (MPF-SEE), the South-eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG), or bilateral initiatives such as those launched between Albania and Croatia;
- Use consultations to reduce conflicts in timing between initiatives and local realities such as elections or internal reform plans;
- Include a “feedback process” as a part of each initiative that enhances consistent engagement;
- Take advantage of informal structures to increase consultations;
- Take advantage of local civil society institutions and other analytical institutions in the evaluation and coordination of initiatives (for example, local universities or the Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies);
- Focus some initiatives on soft security issues such as organized crime or illegal trafficking;

- Link specific projects to concrete financial resources;
- Produce a strategy that will support the continuity of regional and bi-lateral cooperation agreements during future EU or NATO enlargement;
- Initiate a process to reduce the creation of new barriers during future EU or NATO enlargement (for example, as a result of Schengen border enlargement, or trade diversion);
- Enhance EU and NATO engagement with the public and media to increase public understanding and support

CONCLUSIONS

The European Union and NATO are welcome participants in the process to enhance security and stability in Southeast Europe. The participants supported an acceleration of EU and NATO enlargement and expressed a hope that these organizations would be inclusive for the whole region. While they appreciated the opportunity to gain new insights into the EU and NATO visions for the future, they shared the view of many speakers that the harmonization of the future of the ESDP and the future of NATO remains a work in progress.

Separated from the constraints of official policy, the participants appreciated the opportunity to express some frustration with the limited consultations with EU and NATO leaders about their region. However, their frustration was matched by a willingness to understand the constraints these organizations face in their ability to expand the consultation process.

Most important, the participants’ visions for a more cooperative future were supported by a set of concrete recommendations on the way forward. Putting forth recommendations for increasing the quality of cooperation, the participants signaled both an appreciation for their ownership of both the challenges and solutions for the region and an appreciation for the need to coordinate their actions with leaders in the EU and NATO.

*Alan Gorowitz serves as a Plans Officer at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany. This report is based on the conclusions of the participants of the conference.

For further information on this event or other activities at the Conference Center:

Conference Center
George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies
www.marshallcenter.org

Gernackerstrasse 2
 82467 Garmisch-Partenkirchen
 Germany
 PH: 49-8821-750-760
 FAX: 49-8821-750-841

ECMC-CC
 UNIT 24502
 APO, AE 09053
 USA
 DSN: 440-2760
 DSN FAX: 440-2841